



POLICY BRIEF #5

SCHOOL FEEDING IN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES: The quilombola PNAE

Photo: FNDE



World Food Programme
Centre of Excellence
against Hunger

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil has one of the largest, most well-established school feeding programmes in the world, serving more than 40 million students daily in all regions of the country. Implementing this programme in a country of continental dimensions and rich ethnic and cultural variety requires constant innovation and attention to the needs of each community.

This *policy brief* presents the challenges and solutions the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) found to meet the needs and context of traditional quilombola communities. The main strategies this Programme uses to support these communities include allocating a different amount of resources to purchase food for their students, preserving food culture through school menus, and purchasing food from local smallholder farming.

THE ETHNIC-RACIAL DIVERSITY OF BRAZIL

Brazil is a country of wide ethnic-racial diversity; its population consists of descendants of several peoples: indigenous peoples of various ethnicities, Portuguese, African (from many regions of the continent), Spanish, Italian, Arab, Jewish, German, and Japanese.

This variety gave rise to a culturally rich nation, but with deep socioeconomic inequalities related to color, race, and ethnicity. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in 2019, around 43% of Brazilians declared themselves as white, 47% as *pardo*¹, 9% as black and 1% as yellow or indigenous². These same data indicate that black, *pardo*, and indigenous populations have severe disadvantages compared to the white population in terms of labor market, income distribution, housing conditions, education,

violence, and political representation. Despite representing more than half of the Brazilian population (57%) if added, in 2018 the *pardo*, black, and indigenous populations concentrated only 24% of the political representation in the Federal House of Representatives and had almost half of the average household income *per capita* of the white population (BRL 934 vs. BRL 1846)³.

The Brazilian government is committed to the fight against social inequalities in order to defend the right to equality guaranteed by the Federal Constitution. It relies on several entities involved with diagnosing and implementing measures to reduce and fight inequality.

THE AFRICAN PRESENCE IN BRAZIL AND THE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES

The strong presence of African peoples is a striking feature of Brazilian history and identity. In the American continent, Brazil was the country that trafficked the most African enslaved people: around 4 million between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the equivalent of more than a third of all slave trade⁴. The slave trade brought to the country men, women, and children from various regions of Africa, with the majority coming from the regions where Angola, Mozambique, Côte D'Ivoire and Nigeria are currently located.

The history of black resistance on Brazilian soil is visible in the strong abolitionist and quilombola movements during the colonial and imperial periods, as well as several fronts of black movements in the republican period. The quilombola movements exist since the 16th century and have resisted as free territories throughout the entire slavery period, which the country only abolished in 1888.

Symbols of freedom, these communities exist to this day. Currently, quilombola is the denomination of peoples who live in remainder quilombo⁵ communities, classified as "ethnic-racial groups according to self-attribution criteria, with their own historical trajectory, endowed with specific territorial relations, with presumption of black ancestry related to resistance to historical oppression"⁶.

The quilombola communities are multiple, varied, and are distributed throughout the national territory, both in cities and the countryside. According to IBGE, there were 5,972 quilombola localities in 2019 – over half of these concentrated in the northeastern region of Brazil⁷.

One of the main demands of black movements has been the right to schooling as a tool for better social insertion and prominence in the labor market; and for production and access to knowledge about their own history. Despite still facing many challenges, Brazil has made great advances in this agenda in recent decades with the significant expansion of access

and quality of basic education, the inclusion of African and Afro-Brazilian history in the national curriculum and the creation of ethnic-racial quotas for admission to public universities⁸.

Despite its relevance as a Brazilian cultural heritage, most quilombola communities are in extreme poverty and have serious problems related to access to public and social policies. Recent studies highlight food insecurity as one of the most important problems in these communities⁹.



QUILOMBOLA SCHOOL EDUCATION AND PNAE

Quilombola School Education is a specific type of education in Brazil, with different national guidelines. Legislation provides that it must be developed in educational units inserted in their own lands, based on the culture of their ancestors, have its own pedagogy and be in accordance with the ethnic-cultural specificity of each community, recognizing and valuing them¹⁰. In 2019, this type of education served over 240,000 students in all regions of the country, classified by the school census as those enrolled in schools located in remainder quilombo areas¹¹.

The resistance of quilombola groups involves the struggle for preservation of their traditions and culture, including their food. The preservation of food preparation methods, as well as the use of specific foods of each population, is a desired action to maintain the memory, identity, and even health of quilombola peoples. Brazilian legislation guarantees school meals tailored for sociocultural specificities of communities, respecting their habits and traditions. The issue of malnutrition and the need for complementary school feeding is treated with attention, considering the situation of social vulnerability of students¹².

The Brazilian National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) offers school feeding and educational activities on food and nutrition to public school students for 200 school days per year. This has the goal of contributing to development, learning, school performance, and to the creation of healthy eating habits for schoolchildren in the country.

The PNAE offers meals to students of all stages of Brazilian public basic education through a regime of collaboration and shared administration between different entities of the Federation. The federal government transfers additional financial values to states, municipalities, and federal schools, according to the number of students enrolled in each school network. Local entities are then responsible for purchasing food and implementing the programme on the ground.

Regarding quilombola school feeding, it is important to note that from Law No. 11.947/2009, the programme adopted measures to benefit quilombola communities, increasing the per capita value transferred to quilombola students enrolled in quilombo areas and giving priority to quilombola smallholder farmers when purchasing food for school.





Photo: FNDE

feeding.

In addition to the concern of valuing traditional cultures, the PNAE also considers the social vulnerability situation that traditional communities, such as quilombos, have faced historically. This results in higher nutritional deficit rates compared to the population as a whole. Therefore, the legislation of the PNAE determines that the menu prepared for schools in quilombola communities must reach at least 30% of daily nutritional needs of students per meal offered. This is 10 points higher than the percentage mandated for other students, which is 20%. In cases where three daily meals are offered, a minimum of 70% of nutritional needs must be provided.

Therefore, students enrolled in public schools within traditional communities, such as the quilombolas, receive a distinguished resource from the federal government for school feeding in order to ensure food security for their community and preserve their own food cultures.

THE SCHOOL FEEDING COUNCILS

The PNAE has an important social participation tool: School Feeding Councils. The councils are responsible for monitoring compliance with the PNAE guidelines and acting to strengthen specific programme actions at the local level.

For quilombola communities, councils can play an even more strategic role in ensuring and supporting compliance with specific PNAE guidelines for these populations. Programme rules include a recommendation to have representatives of quilombola communities in School Feeding Councils in all states and municipalities that have students enrolled in schools located in quilombo areas¹³.

Local counselors help the programme understand the cultural characteristics of their group and contribute to control specific PNAE actions for these ethnicities. The PNAE highlights how important it is that school feeding managers and nutritionists research the food culture of quilombola communities under their responsibility in order to respect and recover it. One of the greatest current challenges of implementing the PNAE in quilombola communities is adapting the menu and food purchase to local habits¹⁴ and School Feeding Councils can play a key role in this process.



Photo: FNDE

PURCHASE OF FOOD PRODUCED BY THE QUILOMBOLA PEOPLES FOR THE PNAE

The PNAE also supports local social development and agriculture through purchase from smallholder farming, under legal mandate of spending at least 30% of its resources in the purchase of foodstuffs from small producers. In addition to ensuring a higher quality school feeding, the programme has an even more important role in quilombola communities, contributing directly to the adaptation of menus to food culture and to socioeconomic advances in rural territories, where many of these communities are located.

In public procurement, producers from land reform settlements, traditional indigenous communities and quilombola communities should also be prioritized. For this, they must be duly registered with the Declaration of

Aptitude to Pronaf (DAP), a tool to identify smallholder farmers so they may access public policies.

However, the process of acquiring food from smallholder farming for PNAE may present challenges, particularly in remote areas. For quilombola farmers, the process of accessing the farmer identification tool can be complex due to difficulties in registering quilombola lands with the federal government and the low level of formal land ownership among farmers.

Over the last decade, the PNAE has undergone reformulations that have expanded its scope and brought innovations, especially regarding procurement for school meals. In addition to seeking to meet the principles of food and

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nutrition security, the programme aims to promote local development through articulations with smallholder farming. In this context, the indigenous PNAE experience in Amazonas, implemented by the Commission of Traditional Foods of the Peoples in Amazonas (Catrapoa), showed several benefits of widely including traditional food items in school feeding, such as animal products and processed vegetables, with adaptation of sanitary standards to the culture and tradition of these peoples¹⁵

The consolidation of this initiative was possible due to the network action of the many institutions that make up the Commission. These partnerships are essential to overcome and seek joint solutions to challenges and obstacles, such as logistics, training, and technical assistance to traditional communities and issuance of documents, especially in the Amazon region.

The experiment was so successful that the Federal Public Ministry issued a technical note¹⁶ that made it possible to expand and replicate this good practice for quilombola communities, indigenous peoples, and traditional communities all over the national territory. It is important for actors who wish to implement this practice in a municipality, state, or region to keep an articulation with local regulatory entities and executors of procurement policies, as well as to seek awareness when applying the legislation. Thus, income generation, adequate food, and respect for these peoples' culture and way of life are guaranteed, and also fulfill the legal obligation to use at least 30% (and may reach 100%) of PNAE resources to purchase from smallholder farming, prioritizing these groups.

The expansion of this successful experience is already visible for quilombola school feeding; we highlight the Ribeirão Valley, in the state of São Paulo, Southeastern Region of Brazil. A local commission was formed and already has a prominent role for quilombola communities in the region. This innovative action highlights the importance of strengthening interrelationships between the PNAE and local food cultures, smallholder food production, and local development.

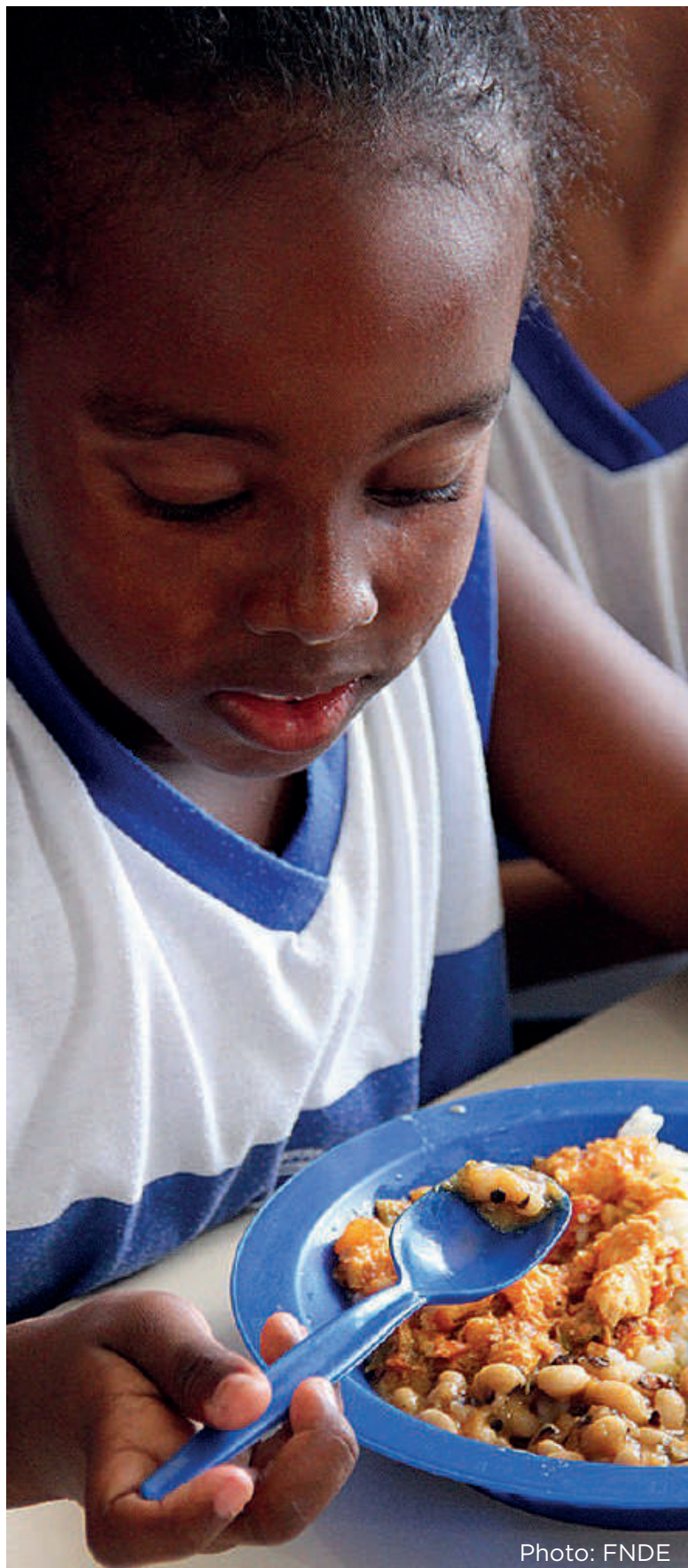


Photo: FNDE

CONCLUSION

Brazilian quilombola communities represent a unique historical and cultural legacy in the country. However, a large part of this population is in a situation of extreme social vulnerability. The Brazilian National School Feeding Programme is a key policy for the promotion of food and nutrition security in quilombola populations. It also represents an opportunity to maintain and preserve food culture and local traditions and fight social inequalities.

The programme still encounters challenges for its full implementation in the local sphere, especially regarding the purchase of food from quilombola farmers and the inclusion of traditional meals in school menus. Despite this, the specific guidelines for the PNAE in traditional communities represent an important network for protection and guarantee of food, cultural, educational, and health rights for quilombola communities.



Photo: FNDE

1. Translator's note: The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) uses the term "pardo" in Brazilian censuses to refer to an ethnic and skin color category. Its definition is complex; the most frequent use refers to Brazilians of mixed races and ethnicities, with a diverse range of skin colors – usually lighter than black and darker than white. I chose not to translate this term as "brown", as some translators may, to avoid confusion with South Asian, Middle Eastern, and other ethnicities identified as brown in English-speaking countries.
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3. "Social inequalities by color or race in Brazil", Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2019. Available at: https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv101681_informativo.pdf.
4. IBGE. <https://brasil500anos.ibge.gov.br/territorio-brasileiro-e-povoamento/negros.html>
5. Translator's note: During the slavery period in Brazil, quilombos were settlements formed by enslaved people who managed to escape captivity. This is why they are called "remainders", as communities that maintained themselves even after slavery was abolished, and that still exist to this day.
6. Decree No. 4.887/2003. Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto/2003/d4887.htm.
7. Database on Indigenous Peoples and Quilombolas / Indigenous and Quilombolas 2019, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. Available at <https://dadosgeociencias.ibge.gov.br/portal/apps/sites/#/indigenas-e-quilombolas>.
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16. "Overweight of quilombola students from Goiás and food insecurity in their families" CORDEIRO et al. 2014. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/m/a/XCxnMQmVCb77QyvQzxNyFPk/?lang=en>
17. The policy brief "School feeding in traditional communities: the indigenous PNAE in Amazonas", available at the Centre of Excellence publications library, details this experience.
18. Technical Note No. 3/2020/6°CCR/MPF. Available at: <https://ispn.org.br/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/4Nota-Tecnica-GERAL-3.2020-6CCR-alimentos-tradicionais.pdf>.

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